

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF ANCIENT CHAMBA AND KANGRA AS GLEANED FROM SHĀRADĀ INSCRIPTIONS

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Shāradā Alphabet

Among the Western Himalaya scripts the Shāradā alphabet has a place of pride. Evolved from north western Brāhmi a millennium ago in the 9th century A.D. it remained in popular use for several centuries in an extensive area of Western Himalayas including North Western Frontier Province, Dardistan, Kashmir, Jammu, Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh. The epigraphic and literary records written in this script, and found in these regions, have thrown light on many facets of the history and culture of the areas of their provenance. The inscriptions of the famous Hindu Shahi Dynasty of Kabul and Ohind and of the Shahi Dynasty of Gilgit, bulk of extant epigraphic and literary records of Kashmir produced from 9th century onwards, the inscriptions including the copper plate charters, fountain stone inscriptions and the temple inscriptions of the erstwhile Western Himalayan States of Chamba and Kangra, and the legends of the coins of the Shahis, the rulers of Kashmir and Mahmud of Ghazni are written in this script. This fact considerably enhances the value of the study of this important regional alphabet for the critical study and analysis of the valuable records written in this script and preserved in several celebrated museum and libraries of the world. Like the Brāhmi and the Kharoshti in the ancient period, the Shāradā script in the early medieval period formed a vital link in the chain of communication of ideas, knowledge, and culture among the states comprised in the Western Himalayan region. Unfortunately the knowledge of this important script is fast disappearing threatening thereby the loss of this rich and proud heritage of Western Himalayas to posterity for ever.

Chamba

Chamba is the only place in the western Himalayas which has yielded a pretty large number of Shāradā inscriptions of diverse types consisting of rock and stone inscriptions, image inscriptions, copper plate inscriptions and the fountain stone inscriptions¹. The earliest Shāradā record is a beautifully executed inscription from Sarahan which contains a lovely poem in praise of the beauty of Somaprabhā, the wife of Sātyaki, a hill Chieftain, in an elegant and well-embellished Kāvya style. The most important and the well preserved inscriptions are the copper plate charters issued by the rulers of Chamba like Yugkāravarman, Vidagdhadeva, Somavarman and Āsata. These charters are important for constituting an important source of information regarding the ancient history and culture of Chamba. Their value is still more enhanced by the fact that they constitute the only specimens of this type of epigraphs that have come to light in the entire north western hill region of the country so far.

A very important group of Sāradā records and unique of its type is formed by those engraved on the elegantly carved fountain slabs discovered from different parts

of Chamba and now preserved in the Bhuri Singh Museum in Chamba town. These slabs were erected at springs by the pious donors for earning religious merit.²

Kangra

Only a limited number of Sāradā records has come to light in Kangra so far. The most important and the well preserved inscriptions are the well known Baijnath *praśastis* incised on two large stone slabs in the famous temple of Baijnath at Baijnath (ancient Kiragrāma) in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh.³ The *Praśasti* No. I gives an account of the construction of a temple in honour of lord Vaidyanathā (Baijnath in vernacular) by two merchant brothers Manyuka and Āhuka and records the donations made to it by some pious individuals. It is dated in the year 80 of the reign of Jayachandra, the lord of Trigarta to whom the ruling Chief of Kiragrāma, Lakṣamaṇa-candra owed allegiance. The date of the *praśasti Sam Jyestha Sukla Pratipat* corresponds to 2nd of May, 1204 A.D. The *Praśasti* No. II contains a brief account of the baronial house of Kiragrāma to which Lakṣamaṇa Candra belonged. It is dated in the Shaka 126 corresponding to A.D. 1204.

Another record worthy of note from Kangra is a brief inscription engraved on the pedestal of a statuette of Jain *Tirthankara Pārśvanātha* dated (*Laukika*) samvat 30 corresponding to A.D. 1254.⁴

SOCIAL LIFE

Varna System

Our inscriptions do not throw much light on the castes and the orders as they existed in ancient Chamba, and Kangra. The copper plate inscriptions of Chamba which comparatively give more details than other records, only mention the names of the four castes but do not furnish details about all of them. It is only about the Brahmanas that we get some detailed information.

The Brahmanas occupied an honoured place in the social hierarchy in ancient Chamba. They received royal patronage in the form of land grants which bestowed on them several rights and privileges. They were granted the ownership of grazing and pasture grounds, kitchen gardens, fruit trees, water courses, channels, the fallow and the cultivable lands which lay within the specified boundaries. The grants were free from all kinds of taxes. The subjects living in the granted area were to pay to the grantee the tax in cash and kind and bring to him every other tribute due to the king. The district and the local officers were ordered not to encamp at the house of the donee nor to demand from him milk, corn, fuel, chaff, furniture, etc. and not to cause vexation to his ploughmen, cowherds, maids and servants. The donations of lands given to them were considered as the means of acquiring religious merit and glory. Thus king Vidagdha granted lands to a Brahmana named Nanduka for acquiring religious merit, for the increase of the glory of his parents and himself, for the sake of the bliss of the next world and in order to cross the ocean of existence.⁵

While the Brahmanas were the recipients of royal charity, they also made gifts for works of public utility. Thus we hear of a Brahmana constructing a fountain of water at Dadvar.⁶

As in Chamba, so also in the adjoining hill tract of Kangra the Brahmanas were piously and charitably disposed. In the Baijnath *Praśastis*, we hear of two Brahmanas making donations to a Śiva temple, erected by the merchant brothers Manyuka and Ahuka. While the former donated two *droṇas* of grain from his lands at *Navagrāma*, the latter contributed half a plough of land, from the lands he occupied at the same place.

The Brahmanas in ancient Chamba were known, as in other parts of India, by their particular *śākhās* and *gotras*. Thus the recipients of king Vidagdha's and Somavarman's grants were of the *Vājasneyī Śākhā* and of *Kaśyapa gotra* and that of king Asata's grant belonged to the *Kaśyapa gotra*.⁷⁻⁸

Besides the Brahmanas and the other three known castes, we find mention of such low castes as the Medas, the Andhrakas, the Dhīvaras and the Cāṇḍālas in a 10th century copper plate charter issued by king Vidagdha of Chamba.⁹

The medas are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*.¹⁰ According to the commentator Nilkantha, they are the flesh of dead cattle. Manu describes Meda as an off spring of a Viadehaka male and a Nisada woman, who dwelt outside the village and whose main business was to kill wild beasts.¹¹

The Āndhrakas, according to Manu¹², were a mixed castes born of Vaidehaka father and Karavara mother. The functions of the Āndhrakas were the same as those of Medas.

The Dhīvaras according to Gautama were a *pratiloma* caste of Vaisya male and Ksatriya female. Their main business was to catch fish.¹³

The Cāṇḍālas are widely mentioned in Smṛiti and Kāvya literature and in such early works as *Taittīreya Brahmana*, *Chāndogya Upanishada*, *Bṛhatāranyaka Upaniṣada* and the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣada*¹⁴ they are ranked with the dog and the boar. In Smṛiti works, the Cāṇḍālas are described as a mixed caste born of a Śūdra from a Brahmana woman¹⁵. According to Manu, the Cāṇḍālas were to live outside the village, use garments of dead bodies as their clothes and were to act as hangmen when the king so ordered.¹⁶

The Cāṇḍālas are also described by the Chinese traveller Fa-hien (A.D. 405-11). According to him they had to live outside and give notice of their approach when entering a town or a market place by striking a piece of wood so that others might not get polluted by their contact.¹⁷ According to al-Biruni, the business of the Cāṇḍālas was to hang persons when they were sentenced to death by the judicial authority.¹⁸

The Cāṇḍālas are also mentioned by Kalhana in his *Rājatarangini*. According to

him though Candalas were booted down upon by people they also served as royal body-guards or as watchmen and at times they were engaged by the selfish conspirators' as agents for killing their political rivals.¹⁹

The mention of these low castes in a 10th century document, referred to above, would show that they continued to form part of the social community in ancient Chamba or more generally, of the Indian population even as late as the A.D. 10th century.

Position of women

Women in ancient Chamba occupied as honoured position in society. They were the object of highest devotion and love of their husbands who often gave expression to their conjugal devotion by constricting fountains for the attainment of religious merit by their wives in the next world. Thus Rājānaka Goga feeling deeply afflicted at the passing away of his wife Sūryamati had a cistern of clear water constructed to ensure bliss for her in the next world.²⁰ Similarly Rājānaka Devaprasāda erected a fountain for the attainment of heavenly bliss by his consort Mekhalā²¹. The husband sincerity of love for his wife is also proved by the Sarahan *Prasasti* which records the erection of a Siva temple by Sātyaki to perpetuate the memory of his spouse Somaprabhā.²²

The conjugal fidelity of Indian women is proverbial and we find women in ancient Chamba never failing in their duty to reciprocate the love and devotion of their husbands by building religious institutions and donating liberally for works of public utility for ensuring the heavenly bliss of their lords in the next world. Thus we hear of queen Rārdhā having constructed a Siva temple for the attainment of religious merit by her husband Salākaravarman.²³ Another queen Balhā erected a fountain for the sake of the bliss of her lord in the next world.²⁴

As regards the custom of Sati our records indicate that though it was in vogue, it was not universally practised. Thus Rājānaka Nāgapāla of Chamba at the death of his father prevented his mother from committing Sati.²⁵ Queen Rārdhā of Chamba and Lakṣaṇā of *Kiragrāma* survived their husbands Salākara-varman and Bilhaṇa, respectively.²⁶

Widows after the death of their husbands led a life of austerity and piety and took part in religious donations. Thus the widowed queen Balhā after being dissuaded from consigning herself to flames emaciated herself by prolonged fasting and increased her charity, her compassion to the poor and devotion to Kṛṣṇa.²⁷ The widowed queen Lakṣaṇā of *Kiragrāma* donated one plough of land to a Siva temple.²⁸

There are indications that widows in Chamba and Kangra had right to property as is indicated by the references to possession of estates by the widowed queen Rārdhā of Chamba²⁹ and Lakṣaṇā of *Kiragrāma*.³⁰

In certain parts of Kangra, the plight of women was miserable. Even their chastity was not secure at the hands of the feudal lords. For example, it is stated in the Baijnath

Prasastis that the rulers thought the sovereignty over a town to yield its legitimate result only by the rape of the wives of their subjects.³¹ There were noble exceptions too, as we learn that the ruling chief Lakṣamaṇa-candra of Kīragrāma took a vow after his pilgrimage to Kedārnātha that thereforth he would treat the wives of others as his own sisters.³²

General life

Our records which are generally dedicatory in character would give us an impression that people were by and large piously and charitably disposed. Not only did they consecrate religious institutions and images but also took part enthusiastically in the acts of public utility. It is heartening to see even people of the far flung areas of Churah and Pangī in Chamba and of Doda and Kishtwar in the neighbourhood engaging themselves in the philanthropic activities. Thus various pious individuals constructed water fountains in water scarce areas of Churah and Pangī.³³

There are indications that extremely affectionate and cordial relations existed among the brothers of a family. In Chamba, they often gave expression to their fraternal love by constructing fountains of water for the sake of the bliss of their deceased brothers. Thus two brothers Raṇasiha and Dhanasiha constructed a cistern of water at the village Siya in Chamba for the sake of the future bliss of their brother Canika.³⁴ Again four brothers named Phiri, Goga, Deva and Siha constructed a water cistern and set up a fountain slab for the sake of the bliss in the next world of their brother Tyāga.³⁵

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Agriculture

Agriculture has been the principal means of livelihood of Indian people from early Vedic times to this day. The copper plate inscriptions of Chamba furnish an encouraging information of the land system as it prevailed in ancient Chamba during 10th, 11th and the 12th centuries.

Lands known by their Names

In the first instance, we find that the lands in ancient Chamba were given proper names. Thus the two pieces of land donated by king Vidagdha bore the names Serī and Lavāla.³⁶ Besides the cultivated lands, the fields, kitchen gardens and the pasture grounds also bore special names. We find the mention of *Sabdabagga*, *Prāhabagga* and *Khanibagga* as the names of fields and *Puṣkari* as the name of a pasture ground and *Yamalikā* as the name of a kitchen garden.³⁷

Types of Land

The two principal types of land were *khila*³⁸ and *polacya*.³⁹ *khila* lands were the waste lands which were not under cultivation. The modern derivative of the term, viz., *khili* in Chamba denotes the same. The term *khila*⁴⁰ occurs in such early works as

Atharvaveda and *Satapatha Brahmana*⁴¹ and is explained in the *Amarakoṣa*⁴² as uncultivated land. The *Nārada Smṛti*⁴³ explains it as a tract of land which has not been under cultivation for three years.

Polacya were the cultivated lands. The term same as medieval *Polaj*⁴⁴ is preserved in the modern Hindi word *polach* which means lands under constant cultivation. So far as cultivated lands were concerned, they must have been at least of two types—one used for the cultivation of rice and the other for the cultivation of wheat, maize, sugarcane and such other crops. The former is mentioned in the Brahmor copper plate grant as *kolhika*.⁴⁵ Even today in Chamba as irrigated piece of land used for the cultivation of rice is called *kolhika*. The word *kolhika* is obviously derived from the vernacular *kohi* which is the corrupt from Sanskrit *kulya* meaning a channel used for irrigation.

Besides the two named above, we find mention of a third type of land called *Upakhila*. This term as compared to *khila* would denote semi or partially waste land:

Ownership of Land

The earlier authors of Smṛtis make a clear distinction between ownership and possession. Thus Yājñavalkya states that the possession acquires validity when it is accompanied by a clear title (*āgamena viśuddhena*) and is not valid without the same⁴⁶. According to Brahmaspati possession becomes valid when it is accompanied with legitimated title (*sāgamaḥ*).⁴⁷ Nārada whose view is more explicit states that where there is enjoyment but no title of any sort, a title is required in order to produce proprietary right. Mere possession is not sufficient to create proprietary right. A clear title having been established, possession acquires validity. But possession without a clear title does not constitute evidence of ownership.⁴⁸ The distinction between the two terms is made even in respect of terminology. Thus ownership is indicated by the pronoun *svam* and the abstract terms *svatva*, *svamya*, *svamitva*, etc. while possession is usually indicated by the verb '*bhuḥ*' (to enjoy) and its derivatives.

The essential qualities associated with ownership as referred to by Gautam⁴⁹ and Manu⁵⁰ are sale, gift and mortgage.

The copper plate grants of Chamba record grants of land of kings Yugākara-varman, Vidagdha, Soma-varman and Āsata. In the grants of Yugākara-varman, Soma-varman and Āsata, the names are mentioned of persons occupying the lands at the time of grants. From what has been said above about the ownership, it is clear that the kings held proprietary rights over the donated lands. The term '*bhujyamāna*', '*satka*'⁵¹ and '*sthita*', in this connection would denote that these lands at the time of donations, were in the temporary possession of the named individuals.

Though on the basis of these few instance, it would be rash to suggest that the ownership of the entire soil in Chamba vested in the king, it would be far more reasonable to suggest that there did exist some royal fields in ancient Chamba which

were owned by the rulers themselves and which were, at times, given by them on lease to tenants.

In the Baijnath *Prasastis*, we have evidence of the private ownership of land in ancient Kangra in the 13th century. Among a number of donations made to the Siva temple of Vaidyanātha, they mention the following gifts made by private individuals.

1. Half a plough of land in Navagrāma, donated by Gaṇeśvara.⁵²
2. The self-owned land (*nija-bhūh*) presented by the merchant Jivaka for the courtyard of the temple.⁵³
3. Four ploughs of land in Navagrāma donated by the merchant brothers Manyuka and Ahuka, the builders of the Siva temple.⁵⁴

These gifts of land evidently show that the land in Kangra in the 13th century was owned by the private individuals. We have also evidence of some tracts of land being owned by the queens. For example, we find that queen Lakṣaṇā, the mother of the ruling chief, donated half plough out of her estate in Pralamba-grāma (modern Palampur).⁵⁵

Agricultural Products

The principal crops sown in ancient Chamba and Kangra were paddy and sugarcane, referred to as *dhanya*⁵⁶ and *ikṣu*.⁵⁷ *Dhanya* of which we find the earliest mention in the Rgveda (VI. 13.4) usually denotes grain in general. In the hill regions of Kashmir, Chamba and Kangra the term is used only for paddy. *Ikṣu* denotes sugarcane which is even now grown in some parts of Chamba.

The Sungal copper plate grant of Vidagdha mentions *rocikā* and *citola*⁵⁸, the exact meaning of which is uncertain. Vogel takes them to be the names of some agricultural products. According to D.C. Sircar, they denote certain obligations or levies the exact nature of which is not known.⁵⁹ However, both the terms are mentioned along with *śasya* (corn), *cāraṇa* (fodder for cattle) and *ikṣu* (sugarcane) and judged from the context, the suggestion of Vogel seems more plausible. The two terms are not known from any literary source and it is difficult to establish their identity.⁶⁰

There is evidence of the cultivation of oil-seeds in Kangra in the 13th century. The Baijnath *Prasastis* (dated Saka 1126 or A.D. 1204) inform us that the oil for the burning of oil lamps inside the temple of Vaidyanātha was provided by the merchant brothers who owned an oil mill (*tailotpidana yantram*) at Kīragrāma. The existence of oil mill indicates the cultivation of the oil-seeds as well.

Methods of Irrigation

The cultivation of paddy presupposes the existence of a proper system of irrigation. Though from our records, we do not get evidence of any large scale irrigation works yet the occurrence of certain words, such as *kolhika*⁶¹, *kullaka*⁶², *kuppattā*⁶³, *pāniya*⁶⁴

and *Udakaśihāra*⁶⁵ enables us to form some idea of the methods of irrigation employed in ancient Chamba.

The word *kolhika* is derived from *kohl* which is the present name for a channel drawn from the hill stream and used for irrigating the rice fields.

Kullaka is derived from *kulla* or Sanskrit *kulya* and denotes a canal

Kuppatta according to Vogel⁶⁶ probably denotes a rivulet. It may also be the same as *kupaka* meaning "a small pit or a hole dug in the dry bed of a rivulet for the collection of water" and stand for a pool or depression where water is collected for irrigation purposes.

Udakaśihāra is not known from any other source and its exact meaning is doubtful. According to Vogel⁶⁷ it means a water course, but it is not possible to explain it etymologically. *Śihāra* in Chamiyali means a furrow. *Udakaśihāra* may mean a water course flowing through the furrow.

Pāniya appears to be the same as *pāna* which denotes a canal.⁶⁸

It would thus seem that in ancient Chamba, irrigation was effected by channels, pools, canals or miniature cuts drawn from the hill streams and rivulets. Even now, the channels drawn from the hill streams and generally known as *kuhl* form the main source of artificial irrigation in Chamba.

Land Measures

The standard land measure in ancient Chamba was *bhū* or *bhūmi*. One *bhū* consisted of four sub-measures called *bhūmaṣkas*.⁶⁹ The land measure *bhū* was in vogue in several other parts of India as well, as is indicated by its frequent mention in the copper plate inscriptions. Its value, however, differed in different localities. In Chamba its value was equivalent to 17 acres. Vogel calculating the measure of land donated by king Āsata, remarks, "The land granted in Āsata's charter, which is stated to be 1 *bhū* 6 *bhūmaṣka* in other other words 2½ *bhū*, has an area of 14 *lahris* or 42 acres, from which it would follow that one *bhu* of land corresponds with nearly 5½ *lahris* or nearly 17 acres."⁷⁰

The area of land was also determined according to the quantity of seed required for sowing it. We find the mention of *piṭaka* in this connection. It is mentioned in the Brahmar copper plate grant of Yugaṅkara-varman where the area of the granted land is expressed in *piṭakas*.⁷¹ The land measure *piṭaka* is also mentioned in the Sankheda plate of Dadda II of the (Kalchuri) year 392⁷², but its exact significance is uncertain. Vogel⁷³ suggests that it may be equated with modern *pīra* which is equal to 40 seers. In the Gupta age also, we find that the area of land was determined according to the measure of grain with which it could be sown. Thus we have references to *adhavāpa*, *droṇavāpa*, *kulyavāpa* in the Damodarpur copper plates.⁷⁴ In the Gunaigarh plate of Vainyagupta, date A.D. 507-508,⁷⁵ we find the area of land measured in terms of

pāṭakas. According to the calculations of Dr. Sircar⁷⁶ on *pāṭaka* is equal to 40 *droṇavāpas* and according to the references given by him, one *droṇavāpas* is equal to 48 acres in certain cases and 25 in other which thus gives the value of one *pāṭaka* as 1920 acres and 1000 acres, respectively. Dr. Maitey⁷⁷, on the other hand, calculates the area of one *pāṭaka* as varying between 72 to 88 acres.

In Kangra land was sometimes measured in *halas*. The measures of land donated to the Siva temple of Vaidyanātha by various individuals are indicated in the Baijnatha *Prasastis* in terms of *halas*.⁷⁸ A *hala* signified as much land as could be ploughed by a single pair of bullocks. Its exact value is not known. Its connotation differed in different localities. V.V. Mirashi⁷⁹ points out that one *hala* of land is said to be equivalent to five acres.

Besides the *pitaka* noted above, other grain measures mentioned in our records are *khāri* and *droṇa*. The former is mentioned in the Chamba copper plate grant where Somavarman is stated to have granted annually one *khāri* of grain from granary (*Koṣṭhāgara*) of Bhadra-varma (modern Bhadrama) to a Vishnu temple. The latter is mentioned in the Baijnatha *Prasastis* (No. 1, lines 27-28) where a certain Brahmana named Ralhaṇa, is stated to have donated six *droṇas* of grain to the Siva temple.

Khāri of which we find the earliest mention in the *Rgveda*⁸⁰ is explained in the *Arthasāstra*⁸¹ as equivalent to 16 *dronas*. D.C. Sircar, quoting Bengali authors remarks that the value of one *droṇa* lies between one maund fourteen seers and two maunds.⁸² *Khāri* is also mentioned in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*⁸³ and this grain measure has been in use in Kashmir from early times to this day.⁸⁴ It consists of 16 traks or 83 kg. corresponding to 117-129/175 lbs. Since the value of *khāri* and *droṇa* differed in different localities in ancient India, it is not known what exact value did the two measures have in ancient Chamba and Kangra. They are no longer used now in the two hill districts.

Revenue System

The copper plate inscriptions do not furnish any direct evidence of taxation in ancient Chamba but the indirect reference in the Sungal copper plate grant⁸⁵ to certain royal dues which the 'subjects, resident in the enjoyed land' were to deliver to the grantee, enable us to form some idea of revenue system as it was in practice in ancient Chamba.

The royal dues mentioned in this connection are :

(1) bhaga, (2) bhoga, (3) kara and (4) hiranya.

Bhaga is mentioned in the *Arthasāstra*⁸⁶ along with *śitā*, *bali*, *kara*, *vaṇik*, etc. T. Ganapati Shastri commenting on the term explains it as '*dhānya-śaḍ-bhāgaḥ*'⁸⁷, i.e. share of produce amounting to one-sixth. Maitey⁸⁸, however, points out that the king's share of the produce did not universally amount to one-sixth. He refers to Bhattasvamin who commenting on the above cited passage of the *Arthasāstra* explains *śaḍbhāga* in

the general sense of royal share (*rāja-bhāga*) and adds that the term one-sixth includes by implication other rates, such as, one-third and one-fourth prevailing in different tracts. According to Dr. U.N. Ghoshal, *bhāga* may be taken to be the king's customary share of the produce levied on the ordinary revenue paying lands which normally though not universally amounted to one-sixth.⁸⁹

It would thus seem that in ancient Chamba, the cultivators had to pay a regular share of their produce to the king as was the custom in other parts of India. Whether the royal share amounted to normal one-sixth of the produce or less, we do not know. It seems to have been also paid in kind and stored in the royal store houses called *koṣṭhāgāras* stationed at the district headquarters. This is indicated by the mention of *koṣṭhāgāra* in the Chamba copper plate grant, from which one *khārī* of paddy was to be delivered to the grantee annually in addition to the other privilege connected with the grant.⁹⁰

Bhoga is explained by Medatithi⁹¹ as *phalabhara nikadyupāyanam* or the present of fruits, firewood, etc. Buhler, evidently on the basis of Medatithi's rendering of the term explains it as, "the periodical supplies of fruits, firewood, flowers and the like which the villagers had to furnish to the king."⁹²

Kara as a term of revenue is frequently mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions and it also occurs in the Girnar rock inscription of Rudradaman.⁹³ It is a familiar term in the *Dharmaśāstras* and in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. In the *Manu*⁹⁴, its significance is interpreted differently by different commentators. Thus Medatithi renders it as 'gift of commodities' (*drāvyaḍīnam*). Sarvajñanārāyaṇa interprets it as a 'fixed gold payment on land' (*bhuminiyatam deyam hiranyam*). Ramacandra explains it 'contribution in the form of grass, wood etc., (*gulmadeyādhikam*). Kullūka renders it as 'contribution from villagers and townsmen either monthly or at *Bhādrapada* and *Pauṣa*. 'Raghavananda interprets it similarly as monthly payment by villagers. Bhattasvāmin, a commentator of the *Arthaśāstra*, explains it as the royal due payable annually during the month of *Bhādrapada*, *Basanta* and the like.⁹⁵ Kṣīrasvamin another commentator of the *Arthaśāstra* interprets the terms as a tax on all movable and immovable articles.⁹⁶ On the basis of these interpretations Dr. Maitey explains the term as 'a periodical tax levied more or less universally on villagers.' While Dr. Ghosal takes it to be a 'general property tax levied periodically.'⁹⁸ Ghoshal also refers to a passage of the *Arthaśāstra*⁹⁹ where the term seems to have been used in the specific sense of an emergency tax levied upon dealers, artisans and the like.¹⁰⁰

However, the exact nature of this tax or royal due does not become quite clear from the interpretations cited above. It is not definitely known whether it was a monthly, annual or an emergency tax. But that it was oppressive in nature is indicated by the Girnar rock inscriptions of Rudradaman where the term occurs along with *viṣṭi* or forced labour and *pranaya* or emergency levy and where it is stated that the king constructed the dam of Sudarśana lake without oppressing the people by means of *kara*, *viṣṭi* and

pranaya.¹⁰¹

Hiranya which literary means gold occurs with such fiscal terms as *bhāga*, *bhoga*, *kara* in the copper plate inscriptions and evidently denotes some tax. Being mentioned along with *bhāga* and *dhānya* usually interpreted as the king's share of produce paid in kind, the term may be taken to denote tax in cash levied upon certain crops where assessment in kind was not possible. According to Dr. Ghoshal, "in the medieval period of Indian history, while the land revenue before the revenue reforms to Todarmal was paid mostly in kind there were certain classes of crops called *zabti*, the levy of which was always assessed in cash since it was very difficult to divide it into shares and, as such, *hiranya* may be taken to denote a levy or tax of this nature".¹⁰²

Another important source of revenue was *Sulka*, the officer responsible for the collection of which was called *Śaulkika* frequently mentioned in our copper plate grants. *Sulka* as a fiscal term occurs in such early works as the *Athervaveda*¹⁰³, *Dharmasūtras*¹⁰⁴ and the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.¹⁰⁵ In the *Amarakoṣa*¹⁰⁶ it is explained as *ghattādideya*, i.e., duties paid at the ferries, etc. Ksīrasvāmin commenting on the expression *ghattādideya* takes *Sulka* to denote the ferry duties, the tolls paid at the military or police stations and the transit duties paid by the merchants.¹⁰⁷ The term also occurs in Manu¹⁰⁸ and is explained by the commentators as duties paid by the merchants. The *Arthasāstra*¹⁰⁹ mentions the term quite frequently and from several references to it in the said text it may be explained as custom or toll duties levied on merchants and collected at the ferries, at the custom houses or octroi posts stationed at the main gate of the town, at the ports and at the frontier stations.

From what has been said above, it would appear that the main sources of revenue in ancient Chamba were (1) land revenue paid in kind or cash (2) custom and toll duties and (3) certain periodical taxes called *kara*. Besides, the villagers were expected to make frequent supplies of flowers, fruits firewood and the like to the king.

In the Baijnath *Prasasti* No. 2(1.27), we have an interesting statement that the ruling chief Lakṣamaṇacandra allotted to the Siva temple daily six *drammas* of money collected at the *maṇḍapika*. Buhler, on the analogy of the modern Gujrati and Marathi word *mandavi* which he believes to be the modern representative of ancient *maṇḍapikā* and which means a 'custom house, renders *maṇḍapikā* as 'custom house'.¹¹⁰ The term is also mentioned in the form of *maṇḍabikā* in the Pallava grant of Sivaskandavarman¹¹¹ where also according to Buhler¹¹² it denotes a custom house. It also occurs in the Bilhari stone inscription of Yuvarajadeva II¹¹³ where it denotes a market pavilion in the town where various articles brought for sale were assessed and taxed.¹¹⁴ It is mentioned along with *Sulka*, in one of the Bhavanagar inscriptions¹¹⁵ and we may assume that *maṇḍapika* in ancient Kiragrāma was a sort of an octroi or custom post situated near the market place in the town, where the articles brought for sale were charged octroi or custom duties according to their nature.

It would thus appear that the custom and the octroi duties were a source of revenue in ancient Kangra as well and the same were collected at the custom houses or octroi posts called *maṇḍapikās*.

Currency

The coin denomination prevalent in Chamba and Kangra in the A.D. 12th and the 13th century was *dramma*. It is mentioned in the Luj fountain inscription of the first year of Jasata dated 1105-06 and in the Baijnath *Prasasti* No. 2 dated A.D. 1204. In the former, owing to the language being extremely corrupt, it is not exactly known as to in what connection it is mentioned. Vogel thinks that the expression *mūla(mūlya)* 20 *dramma* occurring in the record denotes the cost of grain (mentioned as *dhanik* or *dhānya*), supplied by the donor for a feast held on the occasion of the erection of the fountain slab.¹¹⁶ In the Baijnath *Prasastis* it is mentioned in connection with the donations made to the Siva temple. It is stated that the ruling chief Lakṣamaṇacandra allotted daily 6 *drammas* collected at the custom house or *maṇḍapika*.¹¹⁷

The term *dramma* which is generally believed to be the derivative of Greek *drachma*, was according to D.R. Bhandarkar, a coin denomination prevalent all over Northern India 'in the late mediaeval period, that is from 9th to the 13th century'.¹¹⁸ In his opinion, 'the earliest record where this word has been traced is the Gwalior inscription of Bhojadeva of the Imperial Pratihara dynasty and dated A.D. 875. However, the term occurs even earlier in a Yaudheya coin of A.D. 3rd century which bears the legend 'devasya drama Brahmaṇa'¹¹⁹ which according to S.K. Chakraborty may be construed as "*Brahmaṇya devasya drama* meaning the coin dedicated to *Brahmaṇyadeva* or *Kārttikeya* the tutelary deity of the Yaudheya tribe.¹²⁰ The name *dramma* according to Bhandarkar¹²¹ signified only the coins in silver and it would thus appear that the coinage used in ancient Chamba and Kangra was of silver. This also reflects the prosperous economic conditions prevailing in the two hill districts in the 12th and the 13th centuries.

Trade and Commerce

Trade in ancient Kangra was carried on by a class of people called *Vanik*¹²² or merchants. They were comparatively a wealthier section in the society and carried on trade in the neighbouring districts as well.¹²³ The articles were offered for sale at the stalls called *paṇya śālas*¹²⁴. The articles imported from outside were charged custom duties at the custom posts called *maṇḍapikas*. The duty was paid in terms of silver coins called *drammas*. There were oil mills for extracting oil from the oil-seeds.¹²⁵ The Baijnath *Prasastis* would give us an impression that Kīragrāma was a flourishing town in Kangra in the 13th century. The very size, design and the architecture of the Baijnath temple, as also the number of donations paid to it by the private individuals testify the richness of the resources of the people of this ancient town.

Industry

The only industry of which we get ample evidence in our records is stone-work.

Stone-work appears to have been a very popular industry in ancient Chamba and Kangra. People engaged in this industry were called *Sūtradhāra*.¹²⁶ Though this term is intimately associated with the ancient Indian Dramatic literature, denoting a person in charge of the stage performance, it is also met with frequently in the inscriptions and usually signifies persons engaged in the construction of stone temples or images. In the inscriptions of Chamba, however, they mostly figure as the builders of water fountains. Their extra-ordinary skill in stone-work in Chamba is amply testified by a number of extant profusely carved fountain slabs which display craftsmanship of unique character and in Kangra by the Baijnath temple which with its massive *mandapas* and superb carving evokes highest admiration for the artistic skill of its builders.

Roads and Communications

Well laid out roads seem to have been a luxury in some remote areas of Chamba as they are now. Thus construction of a road, as one of our records¹²⁷ would show, was considered a superior act of piety and charity and the merit accruing from the laying out of a road was considered superior to that accruing from such pious acts as construction of a bridge (*setubandha*) sinking of a well, construction of a hospice erection of a temple and the consecration of an image of god.

NOTES & REFERENCES

1. These have been edited and published by J.H. Vogel in his Antiquities of Chamba State Part-I, referred to in the sequel as Antiquities.
2. Ibid cf Deambi Kaul B.K., Ancient Fountain Stone Inscriptions of Chamba, Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India Vol-VII pp. 30 ff.
3. Edited by George Bhuler in Epigraphia Indica Vol-I pp. 97 ff. Also cf. Deambi Kaul, Ancient Kangra and the Baijnath Prasastis Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal, Hoshiarpur Vol.-XIX, pp. 178 ff.
4. Ibid., p. 120
5. Antiquities No. 15 pp 167 ff.
6. Ibid., No. 20, p 177
7. Antiquities, No. 15, p. 167, No. 14, p. 185.
8. Ibid., No. 16, p. 199.
9. op. cit
10. Anuśāsana Parvan, XXII, 22.
11. Manu Smṛti, X, 36.
12. Ibid., X, 36, 48.
13. Gautama-Dharma-Sūtra, IV, 17.
14. Chāndogya Upanishada, V. 10.7.
15. Manusmṛti, V. 131, X. 12, 16; XI. 175, etc., Yājñavalkya Smṛti, I. 93.
16. Ibid., X. 51, 56.
17. Record of Buddhist Kingdom, Trans, Legge, p. 43.
18. India, Trans. Sachau, Vol. I, p. 102.
19. RT. V. 77, VI. 79, 192.
20. Antiquities, No. 34, pp. 229-30
21. Ibid., No. 22, p. 180.
22. Ibid., No. 23, p. 157.
23. Ibid., No. 25, p. 194.
24. Ibid., No. 32, p. 212.
25. Antiquities, No. 32, p. 211.
26. Ibid., No. 26, p. 194, Baijnath Prasasti, No. 11, 1.28.
27. Ibid., No. 32, lines 10-12.
28. op. cit.
29. op. cit.

30. op. cit.
31. op. cit. No. 1, 1.20.
32. Ibid.
33. op. cit.
34. op. cit. p. 221
35. op. cit. p. 243
36. Antiquities, No, lines 11-12 p. 167.
37. Śabdabagga and Pushkarī are mentioned in the Brahmor Grant of Yugakarvaraman, op. cit., p. 163 text line 7-8 and Prāhabagga and Khanibagga and Yamalikā in the Sungal Grant of Vidagdha, ibid., p. 167, text line 13, Bagga obviously denotes a vernacular term bāg meaning a field.
38. Ibid., pp. 167 text line 15-17, 185 text line 21, 193 text line 20, 199 text line 13.
39. Ibid., p. 167.
40. VII. 115, 4.
41. VIII. 3, 4, 1.
42. II, I, 5.
43. XI. 26.
44. Irfan Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, p. 201.
45. Ibid., p. 162 text line 7.
46. Yājñavalkya Smṛti, II, 29.
47. Brhaspati Smṛti. VII. 24-15, 30.
48. Nārada Smṛti, I. 84, 85.
49. Gautam Dharmasūtra, C. 59.
50. Manusmṛti, VII, 199.
51. Satka, which is frequently mentioned in the copper plate inscriptions, is explained by D.C. Sircar (Indian Epigraphical Glossary, p. 306) as the Sanskritised form of Prakrit Santaka meaning 'the holding of)' 'belonging to'
52. Ibid., Prasasti No. 1 line 28.
53. Ibid., line 29.
54. Ibid., No. II, line 30.
55. Ibid., No. 1, line 28.
56. op. cit., p. 194, No. 25, text line 21, Baijnath Prasasti No. 1, text line 27.
57. Ibid., p. 167, No. 15, text line 23.
58. Ibid.

59. Sircar, D.C. op. cit., pp. 75, 181.
60. Rachika may be the same as rochaka, one of the meanings of which given by Monier William's op. cit., p. 888, is a kind of onion "grantha-parṇa bheda".
61. op. cit., p. 160, No. 14, text line 7.
62. Ibid., p. 164, No. 15, text line 16.
63. Ibid., text line 15.
64. Ibid., text line 16
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., p. 168. Monier William's Dictionary. p. 300.
67. Ibid.
68. Monier William's op. cit., p. 613.
69. This is indicated by the Chamba copper plate grant op. cit., which records the total grant of 15 bhū of land divided into two portions, one consisting of 2 bhūmāṣkas and the other of 14 bhu and 2 bhūmāṣkas.
70. Op. cit., p. 191.
71. Op. cit., No. 14, text line 9-10.
72. Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum. Vol. IV. p. 77.
73. Op. cit., p. 160.
74. Epigraphia Indica., Vol. XV. pp. 130 ff.
75. Indian Historical Quarterly., 1930, pp. 45 ff.
76. Select Inscriptions, p. 342, fn. 7.
77. Maitey, S.K., Economic Life of Northern India, pp. 40-41.
78. Op. cit., No. 1, line 28, No. II lines 28-30.
79. CII Vol. IV, p. cl-xxi That hala was a measure of land in ancient Kashmir as well as indicated by reference of hala as a land measure in the-Kuttanimata of Damodaragupta, verse 937. cf. Shastri Ajaymitra, India as seen in the Kuttanimata of Dāmodaragupta, pp. 194-195.
80. IV. 32. 17.
81. II. 19.
82. Sircar, D.C. Op. cit., p. 101.
83. V. 71; also cf. Stein, trans, Vol I, p. 196 n.
84. Modern Kashmiri equivalent of Khārī is Khār.
85. Op. cit., No. 15, line 22.
86. II, 6.
87. Arthasāstra (edited by T. Ganapati Shastri), p. 186.

88. Maitey, Op. cit., p. 57.
89. Ghosal, U.N., History of Revenue System, pp. 34-35.
90. Op. cit., No. 25, line 21.
91. Vide his commentary on Manusmṛti, VIII, 307.
92. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. I, p. 75 n.
93. Ibid., Vol VIII, p. 44.
94. VIII, 307.
95. Karah varṣa-deyah Bhadrāpadika-Vasantikādy-upadānam, vide Bhattasvamin's commentary on the Arthasāstra. II, 15.
96. Pratyekam, 8thāvara-jaṅgamādi-deyah karah.
97. Economic Life of Northern India, p. 59. Maitey's explanation is the same as given by Ghoshal in his Historiography, p. 173.
98. History of Revenue system, p. 36.
99. V. 2.
100. Op. cit.,
101. Apīdayitvā kara-viṣṭi-praṇaya-kiryabhih paura-janapadam.
102. Ghoshal, Op. cit., pp. 60-61.
103. III, 29, 3.
104. Gautama Dharma-sūtra, X. 25, Āpastamba Dharma-sūtra, II.26. 9.
105. V. I. 47.
106. II. 8. 27.
107. Ghatto naditarasthanamadi-sābdāt gulma-paratolyadau praveśya-naṣ-kramya-dravyabhyo rājagrahya bhāḡah śūlkah.
108. VIII. 307.
109. II. 6, 16, 21, 28, 35, etc.
110. Epigraphia Indica Vol. I, p. 117.
111. Ibid., pp. 2 ff.
112. Ibid., p. 7 n.
113. Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum Vol. 4, No. 45, pp. 204 ff.
114. Ibid., p. 223, fn. 2 and p. cixx. According to V.V. Mirashi, loc. cit. maṇḍapikā (From which the Marathi word maṇḍai a market place is derived) seems to have been a pavillion in the market place where things brought to the market for sale were taxed. The term may be preserved in the modern Hindi word Mandi meaning a market place, same as Marathi mandai.

115. Bhayanagara Sanskrit and Prakrit Inscriptions, p. 159 where we have mention of Sulkamāṇḍapikā.
116. Op. cit., p. 204.
117. Op. cit., 1.27, p. 115.
118. Lecture on Ancient Indian Numismatics, p. 206.
119. Smith, Catalogue of Coins in the Indian Museum, p. 186.
120. Indian Historical Quarterly., 1939, Vol. XV, p. 70.
121. Op. cit., p. 207.
122. The term is mentioned frequently in the Baijnath Prasasti, No. 1, lines 23, 26, 29.
123. Ibid., No. II, lines 25-26.
124. Ibid., line 30.
125. Ibid., line 29.
126. The term occurs at the end of most of the fountain inscriptions of Chamba and figures as the designation of a person who prepared the fountain slab. It is also mentioned in the Baijnath Prasasti No. 1(1.30) where certain Nāyaka is described as vasan-sūtradhārādhuri who along with certain Thodduka is stated to have fashioned with the chisel-tānkita, the Śiva temple along with its maṇḍapas. The term is also seen in the blurred brief inscription in one of the outer pillars of the famous temple of Śaktidevī at Bharamaur where the word is followed by a proper name-of which only a couple of letters are preserved-perhaps of the architect who fashioned the elegantly carved temple. The Lodu (Kashmir) inscription, Deambi. op. cit. No, 18 mentions Sthāpati which is probably the synonym of Sutrādhāra, see Visnu-dharmottra, II, 24. 39.
127. Antiquities, p. 236.